

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for playing a game, the method comprising:
 - displaying a plurality of indicia-bearing game pieces on a gaming grid;
 - selecting game pieces that are adjacent to one another and that have matching indicia;
 - removing from the grid the matching adjacent game pieces that are selected; and
- 5 awarding a prize associated with the selection and removal of the matching adjacent game pieces.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein the selection of game pieces that are adjacent and have matching indicia, and the removal of any matching adjacent game pieces that are selected, proceeds one pair of matching adjacent game pieces at a time.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein the selection of game pieces that are adjacent and have matching indicia, and the removal of any matching adjacent game pieces that are selected, proceeds until all matching adjacent game pieces that are perceived by a player are removed, and the prizes associated therewith have been awarded.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein adjacent game pieces are defined as game pieces that touch along a vertical edge, a horizontal edge, or a diagonal corner.
5. The method of claim 1, wherein each game piece contains only a single indicium that is used to potentially match with the indicia displayed on adjacent game pieces.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein the indicium displayed on each game piece that is used to match with the indicia of adjacent game pieces corresponds to the prize to be awarded.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the prize to be awarded is a non-monetary prize.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein the prize to be awarded is a displayed magazine photograph.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein the prize to be awarded is a displayed magazine cover.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein each game piece contains a plurality of indicia that are used to potentially match with at least one of the plurality of indicia of the adjacent game pieces.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein each game piece contains three indicia that are used to potentially match with at least one of the three indicia of the adjacent game pieces.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein three indicia of the game pieces include game piece color, type of indicia, and color of indicia.

13. The method of claim 1, wherein the game pieces are selected using touch screen technology.

14. The method of claim 1, wherein the game pieces are video representations of game pieces.

15. The method of claim 1, wherein the game pieces are tiles.

16. The method of claim 1, wherein method for playing a game incorporates the use of selection buttons.

17. The method of claim 3, further comprising:

after all matching adjacent game pieces that are perceived by a player are selected and removed, shuffling any remaining game pieces into a consolidated grouping, thereby providing a player with another opportunity to select and to remove any matching adjacent game pieces.

18. The method of claim 17, wherein the shuffling of any remaining game pieces and the selecting of matching adjacent game pieces is repeatable a predetermined number of times.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein the shuffling of any remaining game pieces and selecting of matching adjacent game pieces is repeatable up to three times.

20. The method of claim 1, wherein one or more prizes are awarded in connection with the total number of matches made of adjacent game pieces.

21. The method of claim 1, wherein one or more prizes are awarded in connection with indicia shown on games pieces that are matched.

22. The method of claim 1, wherein one or more prizes are awarded in connection with indicia shown on games pieces that are matched last.

23. The method of claim 1, wherein one or more prizes are awarded in connection with indicia shown on games pieces that are not matched.

24. The method of claim 1, wherein one or more prizes are awarded in connection with the speed with which the game pieces are matched.

25. The method of claim 1, wherein one or more prizes are awarded in connection with the number of shuffles required to match all the game pieces.

26. The method of claim 1, wherein one or more prizes are awarded in connection with the matching of all game pieces.

27. The method of claim 1, wherein one or more prizes are awarded in connection with player status.

28. The method of claim 1, wherein the method for playing a game is at least partially skill based.

29. The method of claim 1, wherein the method for playing a game has the appearance of being at least partially skill based.

30. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

in response to a selection event by a player, activating an interactive help feature for a bonus game during play of the bonus game, wherein the help feature is available on demand by the player, and wherein the help feature is initiatable at any time during play of the bonus game
5 so that a player may receive instructions that assist in proper play of the bonus game while the bonus game is in active use; and

resuming play of the bonus game after the use of the help feature is completed.

31. A method for playing a game, the method comprising:

displaying a plurality of indicia-bearing game pieces on a gaming grid;

selecting game pieces that are adjacent to one another and that have matching indicia;

removing from the grid the matching adjacent game pieces that are selected;

5 after all matching adjacent game pieces that are perceived by a player are selected and removed, shuffling any remaining game pieces into a consolidated grouping; and

repeating the selection and removal of any matching adjacent game pieces.

32. The method of claim 31, wherein the selection of game pieces that are adjacent and have matching indicia, and the removal of any matching adjacent game pieces that are selected, proceeds one pair of matching adjacent game pieces at a time.

33. The method of claim 31, wherein the selection of game pieces that are adjacent and have matching indicia, and the removal of any matching adjacent game pieces that are selected, proceeds until all matching adjacent game pieces that are perceived by a player have been removed, and the prizes associated therewith have been awarded.

34. The method of claim 31, wherein adjacent game pieces are defined as game pieces that touch along a vertical edge, a horizontal edge, or a diagonal corner.

35. The method of claim 31, wherein each game piece contains only a single indicium that is used to potentially match with the indicia displayed on adjacent game pieces.

36. The method of claim 35, wherein the indicium displayed on each game piece that is used to match with the indicia of adjacent game pieces corresponds to the prize to be awarded.

37. The method of claim 31, wherein the prize to be awarded is a non-monetary prize.

38. The method of claim 37, wherein the prize to be awarded is a displayed magazine photograph.

39. The method of claim 38, wherein the prize to be awarded is a displayed magazine cover.

40. The method of claim 31, wherein each game piece contains a plurality of indicia that are used to potentially match with at least one of the plurality of indicia of the adjacent game pieces.

41. The method of claim 40, wherein each game piece contains three indicia that are used to potentially match with at least one of the three indicia of the adjacent game pieces.

42. The method of claim 41, wherein three indicia of the game pieces include game piece color, type of indicia, and color of indicia.

43. The method of claim 31, wherein the game pieces are selected using touch screen technology.

44. The method of claim 31, wherein the game pieces are video representations of game pieces.

45. The method of claim 31, wherein the game pieces are tiles.

46. The method of claim 30, wherein method for playing a game incorporates the use of selection buttons.

47. The method of claim 31, wherein the shuffling of any remaining game pieces and the selecting of matching adjacent game pieces is repeatable a predetermined number of times.

48. The method of claim 47, wherein the shuffling of any remaining game pieces and selecting of matching adjacent game pieces is repeatable up to three times.

49. The method of claim 31, wherein one or more prizes are awarded in connection with the total number of matches made of adjacent game pieces.

50. The method of claim 31, wherein one or more prizes are awarded in connection with indicia shown on games pieces that are matched.

51. The method of claim 31, wherein one or more prizes are awarded in connection with indicia shown on games pieces that are matched last.

52. The method of claim 31, wherein one or more prizes are awarded in connection with indicia shown on games pieces that are not matched.

53. The method of claim 31, wherein one or more prizes are awarded in connection with the speed with which the game pieces are matched.

54. The method of claim 31, wherein one or more prizes are awarded in connection with the number of shuffles required to match all the game pieces.

55. The method of claim 31, wherein one or more prizes are awarded in connection with the matching of all game pieces.

56. The method of claim 31, wherein one or more prizes are awarded in connection with player status.

57. The method of claim 31, wherein the method for playing a game is at least partially skill based.

58. The method of claim 31, wherein the method for playing a game has the appearance of being at least partially skill based.

59. The method of claim 31, further comprising:

in response to a selection event by a player, activating an interactive help feature for a bonus game during play of the bonus game, wherein the help feature is available on demand by the player, and wherein the help feature is initiatable at any time during play of the bonus game
5 so that a player may receive instructions that assist in proper play of the bonus game while the bonus game is in active use; and

resuming play of the bonus game after the use of the help feature is completed.

60. A method for playing a game that includes matching adjacent indicia, the method comprising:

displaying a plurality of indicia-bearing game pieces on a gaming grid;

selecting game pieces that are adjacent and that have matching indicia;
5 deactivating the matching adjacent game pieces that are selected; and
 awarding at least one prize associated with the selection and deactivation of the matching
 adjacent game pieces.

61. A method for playing a game, the method comprising:
 displaying a plurality of indicia-bearing game pieces on a gaming grid, wherein each
 game piece displays three different types of indicia;
 selecting game pieces that are adjacent to one another and that have at least one matching
5 type of indicia;
 removing from the grid the matching adjacent game pieces that are selected;
 after all matching adjacent game pieces that are perceived by a player are selected and
 removed, shuffling any remaining game pieces into a consolidated grouping;
 repeating the selection and removal of matching adjacent game pieces; and
10 awarding at least one prize associated with the selection and removal of the matching
 adjacent game pieces.

62. A video gaming machine that displays a primary game and a secondary game, and
 that further provides information to assist a player in how to play a game while the game is in
 play, the gaming machine comprising:

 a video screen that displays game play;
5 a microprocessor that controls at least a portion of the game play; and

an interactive help feature for the secondary game, wherein the help feature is continuously accessible, allowing access to the help feature during play of the secondary game so that a player unfamiliar with the secondary game may receive instructions on how to play the secondary game while the secondary game is currently active.

63. The video gaming machine of claim 62, wherein the interactive help feature includes multiple help screens.

64. The video gaming machine of claim 63, wherein the interactive help feature includes navigation controls to move between the multiple help screens.

65. The video gaming machine of claim 62, wherein the interactive help feature includes both static and animated assets that provide explanations of game play.

66. The video gaming machine of claim 65, wherein the animated assets in the interactive help feature provide real time examples of game play.

67. The video gaming machine of claim 65, wherein the animated assets in the interactive help feature allow a player to participate in at least a portion of a sample bonus game.

68. The video gaming machine of claim 62, wherein the interactive help feature incorporates touch screen controls.

69. The video gaming machine of claim 62, wherein the interactive help feature is exitable by a player at any time.

70. The video gaming machine of claim 62, wherein the interactive help feature occupies only part of the video screen.

71. The video gaming machine of claim 62, wherein the interactive help feature occupies all of the video screen.

72. The video gaming machine of claim 62, wherein the interactive help feature halts play of the bonus game while the interactive help feature is activated.

73. The video gaming machine of claim 62, wherein the interactive help feature does not affect play of the bonus game when the interactive help feature is activated.

74. An interactive help system for a video gaming machine that displays an initial game and a bonus game, wherein the interactive help system provides information that allows a player to learn game rules during play of an active game, the help system comprising:
a video screen that displays at least a portion of the help system when activated;
5 a microprocessor that controls at least a portion of the help system; and
an interactive help feature for the bonus game, wherein the help feature is continuously accessible, allowing access to the help feature at any time during play of the bonus game so that

a player unfamiliar with the bonus game may receive instructions on how to play the bonus game during play of an active bonus game.

75. The video gaming machine of claim 74, wherein the interactive help feature includes multiple help screens.

76. The video gaming machine of claim 75, wherein the interactive help feature includes navigation controls to move between the multiple help screens.

77. The video gaming machine of claim 74, wherein the interactive help feature includes both static and animated assets that provide explanations of game play.

78. The video gaming machine of claim 77, wherein the animated assets in the interactive help feature provide real time examples of game play.

79. The video gaming machine of claim 77, wherein the animated assets in the interactive help feature allow a player to participate in at least a portion of a sample bonus game.

80. The video gaming machine of claim 74, wherein the interactive help feature incorporates touch screen controls.

81. The video gaming machine of claim 74, wherein the interactive help feature is exitable by a player at any time.

82. The video gaming machine of claim 74, wherein the interactive help feature occupies only part of the video screen.

83. The video gaming machine of claim 74, wherein the interactive help feature occupies all of the video screen.

84. The video gaming machine of claim 74, wherein the interactive help feature halts play of the bonus game while the interactive help feature is activated.

85. The video gaming machine of claim 74, wherein the interactive help feature does not affect play of the bonus game when the interactive help feature is activated.

86. A method for playing a gaming machine that incorporates an interactive bonus game help feature, the method comprising:

initiating play of a primary game;

in response to a predetermined outcome of the primary game, initiating play of a bonus

5 game;

in response to a selection event by a player, activating an interactive help feature for the bonus game during play of the bonus game, wherein the help feature is available on demand by the player, and wherein the help feature is initiatable at any time during play of the bonus game so that a player may receive instructions that assist in proper play of the bonus game while the

10 bonus game is in active use; and

resuming play of the bonus game after the use of the help feature is completed.

87. The video gaming machine of claim 86, wherein the interactive help feature includes multiple help screens.

88. The video gaming machine of claim 87, wherein the interactive help feature includes navigation controls to move between the multiple help screens.

89. The video gaming machine of claim 86, wherein the interactive help feature includes both static and animated assets that provide explanations of game play.

90. The video gaming machine of claim 89, wherein the animated assets in the interactive help feature provide real time examples of game play.

91. The video gaming machine of claim 89, wherein the animated assets in the interactive help feature allow a player to participate in at least a portion of a sample bonus game.

92. The video gaming machine of claim 86, wherein the interactive help feature incorporates touch screen controls.

93. The video gaming machine of claim 86, wherein the interactive help feature is exitable by a player at any time.

94. The video gaming machine of claim 86, wherein the interactive help feature occupies only part of the video screen.

95. The video gaming machine of claim 86, wherein the interactive help feature occupies all of the video screen.

96. The video gaming machine of claim 86, wherein the interactive help feature halts play of the bonus game while the interactive help feature is activated.

97. The video gaming machine of claim 86, wherein the interactive help feature does not affect play of the bonus game when the interactive help feature is activated.